

# WHAT CONGRESS AND GANDHI HAVE DONE TO THE UNTOUCHABLES

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## APPENDIX I

### SHRADHANAND ON BARDOLI PROGRAMME FOR UNTOUCHABLES

*Correspondence between Swami Shradhanand and Pandit Motilal Nehru, General Secretary of the Congress, on the Congress Sub-Committee appointed in 1922 to frame a Scheme for the uplift of the Untouchables,*

#### (1) SWAMIJI'S LETTER

The General Secretary,  
All India Congress Committee,  
Camp, Delhi.

I acknowledge, with thanks, receipt of your letters Nos. 331 and 332 embodying resolutions of the Working Committee and of the All-India Congress Committee about Untouchability. I observe with pain, that the resolution of the All India Congress Committee, as at present worded, does not include the whole of what was passed by the Committee.

The facts are these : I sent the following letter to Mr. Vithalbhai Patel (the then) General Secretary on 23rd May 1922, which was also published by the principal dailies of the country.

#### **'MY DEAR MB. PATEL,**

There was a time (vide *Young India* of 25th May, 1921) when Mahatmaji put the question of Untouchability in the forefront of the Congress programme. I find now that the question of raising the Depressed Classes has been relegated to an obscure corner. While Khadi claims the attention of some of our best workers and a liberal sum has been earmarked for it, for the year, while a strong sub-committee has been appointed to look after national education and a special appeal for fund is to be made for the same, the question of the removal of Untouchability has been shelved by making small grants to Ahmedabad, Ahmednagar and Madras. I am of opinion that with a majority of 6 crores of our brethren set against us by the bureaucracy, even the Khadi Scheme cannot succeed completely. The Members of the Working

Committee, perhaps, do not know that on this side, our suppressed brethren are leaving off khadi and taking to buying cheap foreign cloth. ' I want to move the following resolution in the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee .which- comes off on the 7th of June next at Lucknow, that a sub-committee consisting of three members of the All-India Congress Committee be appointed to give effect to the resolution about the so-called Depressed Classes, that a sum of five lakhs of rupees be placed at-their disposal for propaganda work and that in future all applications for grants be referred to the said subcommittee for disposal." My proposal was amended by the Working Committee and ran as follows:—

"This Committee hereby appoints a committee consisting of Swami Shradhanand, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu and Messrs. G. B. Deshpande and 1. K. Yajnik to formulate a scheme embodying practical measures to be adopted for bettering the condition of the so-called Untouchables throughout the country and to place it for consideration before the next meeting of the Working Committee, the amount to be raised for the scheme to be Rs. 2 lakhs for the present."

Mr. Patel asked me to accept the Working Committee's proposed resolution *in toto*. I refused to accept the Working Committee's resolution and in the very first sitting of the All-India Congress Committee substituted 5 lakhs for 2 lakhs with the condition that one lakh of the same be allotted by the All-India Congress Committee out of the funds in its hands, in cash and an appeal be made for the balance.

Mr. Rajagopalachariar, on behalf of the Working Committee, proposed that instead of fixing the amount to be allotted out of the Congress funds now, it should be provided that when the Scheme was accepted by the Working Committee that Committee should allot as much cash as it could then spare for this purpose. I do not recollect the exact words but the purport of the amendment as given above is, to my knowledge, true.

On this an uproar arose and the query was pressed from all sides that the cash balance in the hands of the All-India Congress Committee ought to be announced. The President called me aside and told me in confidence that the Congress possessed very little cash balance and if pressed to disclose the true state of affairs it would harm the movement, as outsiders and even C.I.D. people were also present. On this I accepted the amendment of Mr. Rajagopalachariar in spite of protests from my seconder and supporters. But my surprise was great when I found the resolution in the dailies, as reported by the Associated Press, shorn of Mr. Rajagopalachariar's amendment.

After the above resolution was passed, some members suggested that a convener of the sub-committee ought to be appointed and several members

proposed me as the convener. On this, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel (the then General Secretary) got up and said : "As Swami Shradhanand's name occurs first, naturally he will be the convener and therefore there was no need of moving any fresh resolution at all."

Members from all parts of the country began to give information to me about Untouchability in their provinces and pressed me to visit their parts. On this, I made some promises. Then I thought that without some cash for preliminary expenses, no enquiries on the spot could be made and hence no proper scheme could be formulated. I also learnt that Rs. 25,000 had been voted by the Working Committee for "the Independent" of Allahabad and that an application for grant of Rs. 10,000 to the Urdu daily *Congress* of Delhi had been placed by Hakim Ajmal Khan and Dr. Ansari before the Working Committee. So, considering that after all, the Congress might not be so hard pressed for cash, I wrote a letter addressed to the President, asking him to give the Untouchability Sub-Committee an advance of Rs. 10,000 for preliminary expenses.

After all this, the following resolution of the Working Committee forwarded by your letter No. 331 presents a very interesting reading;—

"Read letter from Swami Shradhanand, dated 8th June 1922 for an advance for drawing up a scheme for Depressed Class work— Resolved that Mr. Gangadharrao B. Deshpande be appointed convener of the sub-committee appointed for the purpose and he be requested to convene a meeting at an early date, and that Swami Shradhanand's letter be referred to the Sub-Committee"

There is another matter which is inexplicable. After my first letter had been acknowledged, I addressed the following letter from Haridwar on 3rd June 1922:—

**"MY DEAR MR. PATEL,**

I shall leave Haridwar the day after tomorrow and reach Lucknow on the morning of June 9th. You know by now, that I feel the most for the so-called Depressed Classes. Even in the Punjab I find that no attention worth the name has been paid to this item of the constructive programme. In the U. P. of course it will be an uphill work. But there is another very serious difficulty.

The Bardoli programme in its note under item (4) lays down that where prejudice is still strong, separate wells and separate schools must be maintained out of the Congress Funds. This leaves a loophole for those Congress workers who are either prejudiced against the Depressed Classes or are weak and no work can be done in inducing people to agree to allow the Untouchables to draw water from common wells. In the Bijnoor District, I learn there was no restriction and the Untouchables drew water freely from

common wells. But in some places, fresh prejudice is being engendered under the aegis of the Bardoli resolution note. In my recent visits to Ambala Cant., Ludhiana, Batala, Lahore, Amritsar and Jandiala, I found that the question of the removal of disabilities of the Untouchables is being ignored. In and near Delhi, it is the Dalitodhar Sabha, of which I am the president, rather than the Congress which is doing appreciable work. I think that unless item (4) of the Bardoli constructive programme is amended in proper form, the work which I consider to be the most important plank in the Congress programme, will suffer.

Kindly place the following proposal before the President and if he allows it to be placed before the next meeting, of the All-India Congress Committee, I shall move it there—"Instead of the Note under item (4) of the Bardoli resolution substitute the following note;—.,

"The following demands of the Depressed Classes ought to be complied with at once, namely that (a) they are allowed to sit on the same carpet With citizens of other classes ; (b) they get the right to draw water from common wells and (c) their children get admission into National schools and Colleges and are allowed to mix freely with students drawn from the so-called higher castes."

I want to impress upon the members of the All-India Congress Committee the great importance of this .term. I know of cases where the Depressed Classes are in open revolt against tyranny of the so-called upper castes and unless the above demands are conceded to them, they will succumb to the machine of the bureaucracy.

After my first proposals were passed in the All-India Congress-Committee Meeting on *June* 7th at Lucknow, I asked Mr. Patel to put my proposed amendment of Note to item (4) of Bardoli resolution before the meeting. He told me that the Working Committee would refer it to the .Sub-Committee and asked me not to press it there. I agreed. But I have not received copy „of my resolution of the Working Committee, referring my proposal to the Untouchability Sub-Committee.

The Untouchability question is very acute in and near Delhi and I have to grapple with it at once. But the Sub-Committee cannot begin work off-hand because the Working Committee has to take several other political situations in the country into consideration before deciding upon any scheme of practical measures to be adopted for uprooting Untouchability on behalf of the Congress. Under these circumstances, I cannot be of any use to the Subcommittee and beg to resign from membership.

Yours sincerely,  
SHRADHANAND SANYASI.

Delhi, Jan. 80.

**SECRETARY'S REPLY**

DEAR SWAMIJI,

Your letter, dated June 1922 received in my office on the 30th of that month, has by a resolution of the Working Committee passed in Bombay on the 18th instant been referred to me with instructions to explain facts and request you to be good enough to reconsider your resignation from the Depressed Classes Sub-Committee.

As you are aware, I have no personal knowledge of the facts which happened prior to my release from the jail. But I was present at the meeting of the Working Committee which passed the resolution dated 10th June 1922, appointing Mr. Deshpande as the Convener of the Sub-Committee. It was not then mentioned that there was any understanding about any particular member acting as the convener of the Sub-Committee and the whole resolution was passed merely to complete the necessary formalities in regard to the payment of money. It was felt that a formal resolution of the Sub-Committee was necessary before any expenditure could be sanctioned. Mr. Deshpande was accordingly appointed as the convener and a sum of Rs. 500/- was voted for the expense of these preliminary steps. By an oversight, the resolution as drafted omitted to mention the sanction of Rs. 500/-. You will thus observe that it was not due to the unwillingness of the Working Committee . to sanction Rs. 10,000/- for Untouchability, but the true reason for framing the resolution in the manner it was framed was that I have explained above. Nothing could be farther from the intention of the Working Committee than a desire to under-rate the importance of the work your Sub-Committee was called upon to do or in any way to ignore the valuable advice tendered by you. On your letter being placed before the last meeting of the Working Committee, the omission of the grant of Rs. 500/- was supplied and I was instructed to communicate with you on the subject. It will be a great pity if the Sub-Committee is deprived of the benefit of your experience and special knowledge of the whole question of Untouchability and I will ask you, therefore, in public interest, to reconsider your decision and wire to my office at Allahabad withdrawing your resignation from the Sub-Committee. I need hardly add that any resolutions arrived at by your Sub-Committee will receive all the consideration they deserve at the hands of the Working Committee.

As to the alteration in the Working Committee's resolution in regard to separate wells and schools, the best course would be for your Sub-Committee to recommend the change and for the Working Committee to adopt it.

I am afraid you are under a misapprehension as regards the grant to *The*

*Independent*, of Allahabad, and *The Congress* of Delhi. In reference to the former, all that has been done is to sanction the application of the U. P. Provincial Committee to advance as a loan to the "Nationalist Journals" Ltd., Rs. 25,000/- from the funds already granted to that Committee and in reference to the latter, the application for a grant of a loan was wholly rejected.

Yours sincerely,  
MOTILAL NEHRU, Bombay,  
*General Secretary*,

July 23, 1922.

**(2) SWAMIJI'S REJOINER**

DEAR PANDIT MOTILALJI,

I received your letter of 23rd July 1922 addressed from Bombay about my resignation from the Untouchability Sub-Committee, I am sorry I am unable to reconsider it because some of the facts brought out by me in my first letter have simply been ignored.

- (1) Kindly enquire of Mr. Rajagopalachariar Whether I did not first propose that at least one lakh should be given in cash out of the funds in the hands of the All-India Congress Committee, whether he did not move an amendment substituting words for the above which purported to promise that when the plan of work formulated by the Sub-Committee was accepted by the Working Committee, that Committee would allot as much money for Untouchability department as it could then spare and whether I did not accept his amendment when the President called me aside and explained the exact financial position at the time. If this is the fact, then why did the amendment not appear with the resolution ?
- (2) Did you enquire of Mr. Vithalbai J. Patel whether the members of the All-India Congress Committee did not propose me as the convener of the Sub-Committee and whether he did not then say—"As Swami Shradhanand's name occurs first naturally he will be the convener and therefore there was no need of moving any fresh resolution at all?" I enquired about this from Dr. Ansari and he wrote back to me on June 17th, 1922, saying that I was appointed convener. Dr. Ansari is with you and you can verify it from him. I hope Mr. Patel has not forgotten all about it.
- (3) Then the immediate work among the Untouchables here is very urgent and I cannot delay it for any reason whatsoever. Kindly have my resignation accepted in the next meeting of the Working Committee, so that I may be free to work out my own plan about the removal of

Untouchability. This was my position at the end of July last. My experience in the Amritsar and Mianwali Jails and the information I gathered there have confirmed me in the belief that unless sexual purity (Brahmacharya) is revived on the ancient Aryan lines and the curse of Untouchability is blotted out of the Indian Society, no efforts of the Congress nor of other patriotic organisations out of the Congress will avail in their efforts for the attainment of Swaraj. And as national self-realization and virile existence is impossible without Swaraj, I, as a Sanyasi, should devote the rest of my life to this sacred cause—the cause of sexual purity and true national unity.

Yours, etc.

SHRADHANAND SANYASI.

Delhi, July 23, 1922.

## APPENDIX II

### POLITICAL SAFEGUARDS FOR DEPRESSED CLASSES

*Supplementary Memorandum on the claims of the Depressed Classes for Special Representation, submitted to the R. T. C, by Dr, Bhimrao R. Ambedkar and Rao. Bahadur R. Srinivasan,*

In the memorandum that was submitted by us last year dealing with the question of political safeguards for the protection of the Depressed Classes in the constitution for a self-governing India, and which forms Appendix III to the printed volume of Proceedings of the Minorities Sub-Committee, we had demanded that special representation of the Depressed Classes must form one of such safeguards. But we did not then define the details of the special representation we claimed as being necessary for them. The reason was that the proceedings of the Minorities Sub-Committee came to an end before the question was reached. We now propose to make good the omission by this supplementary memorandum so that the Minorities Sub-Committee, if it comes to consider the question this year, should have the requisite details before it.

#### (1) EXTENT OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATION

##### A. *Special Representation in provincial Legislature*

- (I) In Bengal, Central Provinces, Assam, Bihar and Orissa, Punjab and the United Provinces, the Depressed Classes shall have representation in proportion to their population as estimated by the Simon Commission and the Indian Central Committee.
- (II) In Madras, the Depressed Classes shall have twenty-two per cent

representation.

(III) In Bombay:

(a) in the event of Sind continuing to be a part of the Bombay Presidency, the Depressed Classes shall have sixteen per cent. Representation;

(b) in the event of Sind being separated from the Bombay Presidency the Depressed Classes shall enjoy the same degree of representation as the Presidency Muslims, both being equal in population. '

*B. Special Representation in .the Federal Legislature.*

In Both Houses of the Federal Legislature, the Depressed Classes shall have representation in proportion to their *population in India*.

### **RESERVATIONS**

We have fixed this proportion of representation in the Legislatures on the following assumptions:—

- (1) We have assumed that the figures for the population of the Depressed Classes given by the Simon Commission (Vol. I, p. 40) and the Indian Central Committee (Report p. 44) will be acceptable as sufficiently correct to form a basis for distributing seats.
- (2) We have assumed that the Federal Legislature will comprise the whole of India, in which case the population of the Depressed Classes in Indian States, in Centrally Administered Areas, and in Excluded Territories, besides their population in Governor's Provinces, will form very properly an additional item in calculating the extent of representation of the Depressed Classes in the Federal Legislature.
- (3) We have assumed that the administrative areas of the Provinces of British India will continue to be what they are at present.

But if the assumptions regarding figures of population are challenged, as some interested parties threaten to do, and if under a new census the Depressed Classes show a lower proportion, or if the administrative areas of the Provinces are altered, resulting in disturbing the existing balance of population, the Depressed Classes reserve their right to revise their proportion of representation and even to claim weightage. In the same way, if the All-India Federation does not come into being, they will be willing to submit to readjustment in their proportion of representation calculated on that basis in the Federal Legislature.

### **(2) METHOD OF REPRESENTATION**

1. The Depressed Classes shall have the right to elect their representatives to the Provincial and Central Legislature through separate electorates of



their voters.

For their representation in the Upper House of the Federal or Central Legislature, if it is decided to have indirect election by members of the Provincial Legislatures, the Depressed Classes will agree to abandon their right to separate electorates so far as their representation to the Upper House is concerned subject to this: that in any system of proportional representation arrangement shall be made to guarantee to them their quota of seats.

2. Separate electorates for the Depressed Classes shall not be liable to be replaced by a system of joint electorates and reserved seats, except when the following conditions are fulfilled :—

(a) A referendum of the voters held at the demand of a majority of their representatives in the Legislatures concerned and resulting in an absolute majority of the members of the Depressed Class having the franchise.

(b) No such referendum shall be resorted to until after twenty years and until universal adult suffrage has been established.

### **(3) NECESSITY OF DEFINING THE DEPRESSED CLASSES**

The representation of the Depressed Classes has been grossly abused in the past inasmuch as persons other than the Depressed Classes were nominated to represent them in the Provincial Legislatures, and cases are not wanting in which persons not belonging to the Depressed Classes got themselves nominated as representatives of the Depressed Classes. This abuse was due to the fact that while the Governor was given the power to nominate persons to represent the Depressed Classes, he was not required to confine his nomination to persons belonging to the Depressed Classes. Since nomination is to be substituted by election under the new constitution, there will be no room for this abuse. But in order to leave no loophole for defeating the purpose of their special representation we claim

(i) That the Depressed Classes shall not only have the right to their own separate electorates, but they shall also have the right to be represented by their own men.

(ii) That in each Province the Depressed Classes shall be strictly defined as meaning persons belonging to communities which are subjected to the system of Untouchability of the sort prevalent therein and which are enumerated by name in a schedule prepared for electoral purposes.

### **(4) NOMENCLATURE**

In dealing with this part, of the question we would like to point out that the

existing nomenclature of Depressed Classes is objected to by members of the Depressed Classes who have given thought to it and also by outsiders who take interest in them. It is degrading and contemptuous, and advantage may be taken of this occasion for drafting the new constitution to alter for official purposes the existing nomenclature. We think that they should be called "Non-Caste Hindus," "Protestant Hindus," or "Non-Conformist Hindus," or some such designation, instead of "Depressed Classes." We have no authority to press for any particular nomenclature. We can only suggest them, and we believe that if properly explained the Depressed Classes will not hesitate to accept the one most suitable for them.

We have received a large number of telegrams from the Depressed Classes all over India, supporting the demands contained in this Memorandum.

Nov. 4th 1931.

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